

#DiscoverEU

EXPLORE MORE

THE INITIATIVE AT A GLANCE

DiscoverEU is an innovative and accessible EU initiative. It aims to help young people, aged 18, engage with Europe by offering them the chance to travel across the EU as individuals or in small groups, regardless of their socio-economic background.

DiscoverEU offers a unique chance for young people to immerse themselves in European culture and history, form new friendships with fellow Europeans, explore their European identity and strengthen their understanding of the EU.

Almost 30,000 travel passes were made available by the European Commission in 2018, giving 18-year-old European citizens the opportunity to embark upon an adventure of their own.

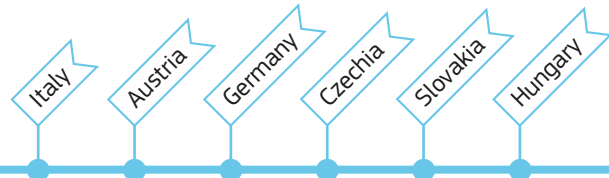
For many young people, the DiscoverEU journey will be the first time they are travelling without their parents or guardians. The initiative therefore has a pivotal role in both teaching key skills and competences, such as problem-solving and self-reliance, and triggering their engagement with community life and the EU.

DiscoverEU enables young people to be the architects of their life, teaching them vital skills and key lessons. It encourages them to become active citizens, embracing the values of community, diversity and solidarity that form the heart of the European Union.

DiscoverEU is an initiative co-created by the travellers themselves. By meeting new people, participating in intercultural dialogue, providing recommendations and sharing stories with other travellers, young people are helping to shape the future of the initiative itself.

"Thanks to this journey, I've had the opportunity to reflect on values such as freedom and social justice. I learned a lot more about European history while travelling than I ever did at school. All the cities that I visited charmed me in their own way; travelling really opens the mind."
Andrea, Italian

"This was the first real experience of my life that I will carry in my heart forever."



ANDREA'S JOURNEY

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THERE'S MORE THAN YOU KNOW



EUROPEAN UNION

DiscoverEU: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

THE JOURNEY SO FAR

Do you remember taking your first trip? The feeling of leaving your home behind, journeying into the unknown and planning or budgeting by yourself for the first time? How much did you learn?

Giving every 18-year-old European the chance to experience this feeling and acquire these skills was the idea that sparked the DiscoverEU initiative. Each person's unique DiscoverEU adventure brings them into direct contact with the rich cultures, traditions, histories, languages and people that define Europe.

There are **4 conditions** linked to the participation of DiscoverEU:

1

The travellers must be 18 years old. The initiative aims to help young people, including those with fewer opportunities, become active citizens in their communities.

2

Travellers can embark on their journey alone, or as part of a group. DiscoverEU is all about forging friendships; whether that's with the people they travel with, or the people they meet along the way!

3

Informal learning is at the heart of the DiscoverEU experience – from developing new skills to discovering new cultures. The initiative encourages the curiosity and the desire to learn that comes with being 18 years old.

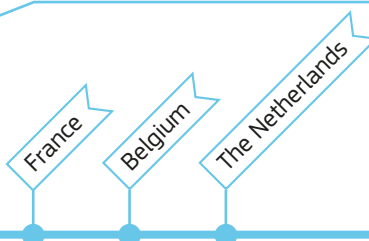
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Rail is the main method of transport for DiscoverEU travellers since it is safe, widely available and environmentally friendly. However, in order to give as many 18-year-olds as possible the chance to explore Europe, alternative transportation – such as ferries, buses and, in exceptional cases, planes – can be offered where necessary.



"Travelling alone gave me the freedom to plan my trip according to my preferences only. And although I was alone at first, I kept meeting amazing people every day and made many friends. I really enjoyed all of the cultural heritage monuments I visited and had an amazing time in the many breathtaking museums I went to." **Marianne, French**

"Honestly, I think what surprised me the most was myself!"



MARIANNE'S JOURNEY

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THE WHEELS ARE IN MOTION

As the initiative gains momentum, it continues to evolve rapidly. What began as a vision to make the EU accessible to all young Europeans, regardless of their socio-economic background, is fast becoming a community-focused action that is moulded, shaped and co-created by the young people that participate. Whether travelling alone or as part of a group, the young travellers, who had never met before, began talking to each other, making plans to meet, and sharing secrets of different cities and towns with other fellow travellers. Thanks to the online Facebook group, the young people were able to make these connections before, during and after their travels, helping them to form cross-border friendships that strengthen their sense of European identity.

DiscoverEU is as much guided and owned by the participants themselves as it is by the European Commission. It is a unique initiative; accessible, dynamic and shaped by those who take part.

THE FUTURE DESTINATION

DiscoverEU is still in its infancy as an initiative, but the future looks bright. The appetite of our young citizens to travel and discover other European countries is significant. More than 85% of the people surveyed who travelled as part of the first round felt that the trip either fully, or to a large extent, met their expectations.

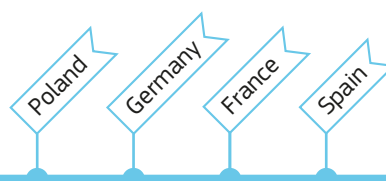
Following its unprecedented success, the European Commission has proposed to include DiscoverEU in the Erasmus programme 2021-2027, maintaining the initiative's simplicity and accessibility while at the same time providing the initiative with a robust learning dimension.

DiscoverEU can act as a stepping stone into other Erasmus activities. The experience might encourage the young travellers to participate in other learning mobilities funded under the European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+ programmes. The experience can also encourage them to engage in community activities or youth movements at a local level.



"My journey reminded me of my geography classes, only instead of illustrations in the book, I could admire the real panorama live."

"During my journey, I learned to manage my budget, I improved my language skills in English, German and Spanish, and I was able to learn about other cultures."
Patryk, Polish



PATRYK'S JOURNEY

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DiscoverEU: IN NUMBERS

180,000 young Europeans applied for one of nearly **30,000** travel passes during the initial 2 rounds of DiscoverEU applications in 2018.

Of the **5,416** DiscoverEU Ambassadors we surveyed from the first round, **70%** would not have been able to afford a travel pass by themselves.

A considerable majority of the respondents (**70%**) declared that embarking on such a journey, with the need to organise every step of the journey by themselves, has substantially boosted their self-confidence, their feeling of responsibility and their level of maturity.

The first round of travels took place from July until October 2018, with the second round of young people travelling between April and October 2019.

In the same survey, **1 in 3 respondents (33%)** said that the trip was the first time that they had been abroad without the company of parents or guardians and **65%** travelled as part of a group of friends. By presenting travellers with new experiences, the DiscoverEU initiative acts as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood.

TICKET TO TOMORROW

Providing young people with the opportunity to explore the EU is essential for encouraging their thirst for knowledge, their sense of curiosity, responsibility and adventure, and above all, their vision of a shared European identity. In the words of Mark Twain, "travel is fatal to prejudice". Accessible to all, DiscoverEU is playing a critical role in the development of the next generation of Europeans.

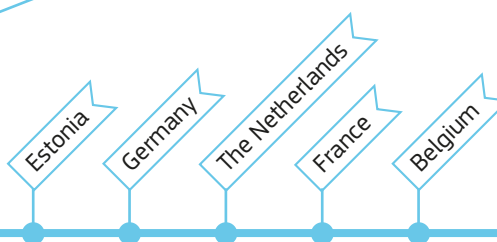
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Almost **two-thirds of the respondents (64%)** said the experience helped them improve their command of foreign languages.

63% of the respondents declared that the main takeaway from the DiscoverEU initiative was the opportunity to interact with the cultures of the countries they were visiting.

"I will definitely try travelling more – maybe even by myself in the future."

"I really liked travelling with my friends and exploring new places. I really want to discover other EU countries as well. Now I've visited other countries without my parents, I've realised that it isn't as scary as it might seem at first."
Linda, Estonian



LINDA'S JOURNEY

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